

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
Between Townsend Wye and Cades Cove
Gatlinburg Vicinity
Sevier County
Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-D

HAER
TENN
78-GAT.V
6D-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

MEASURED AND INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Department of the Interior

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D

HAER
TENN
78-GAT.V
6D-

Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
Tennessee, between Cades Cove and the
Townsend Wye

Date of Construction: ca. 1825 (improvement construction by
NPS in 1930s-50s)

Type of Structure: Roads, Bridges, Tunnels and Landscapes

Use: National Park Transportation System

Engineer: U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and National
Park Service

Fabricator/Builder: Various private and public contractors

Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior,
National Park Service, Great Smoky
Mountains National Park

Significance: The transportation system of Great Smoky
Mountains National Park is
representative of NPS park road design
and landscape planning throughout the
country. Much of the construction work
was undertaken by the Civilian
Conservation Corps during the 1930s.

Project Information: Documentation was conducted during the
summer of 1996 under the co-sponsorship
of HABS/HAER, Great Smoky Mountains
National Park, the National Park Service
Roads and Parkway Program and funded
through the Federal Lands Highway
Program. Measured drawings were
produced by Edward Lupyak, field
supervisor, Matthew Regnier, Karen
Young, and Dorota Sikora (ICOMOS intern,
Poland). The historical reports were

prepared by Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher. See also drawings and histories on related structures: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN-35; Newfound Gap Road, TN-35-A; Clingmans Dome Road, TN-35-B; Little River Road, TN-35-C; Foothills Parkway, TN-35-E; Cataloochee Valley Road, TN-35-F; Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, TN-35-G; Big Creek Road, TN-35-H; Northshore Road, TN-35-I; Cosby Park Road, TN-35-J; Deep Creek Road, TN-35-K; Greenbrier Road, TN-35-L; Heintooga Ridge and Balsam Mountain Roads, TN-35-M; Cataloochee Trail and Turnpike, TN-35-N; Rich Mountain Road, TN-35-O; Elkmont Road, TN-35-P; Loop Over Bridge, TN-35-Q; Smokemont Bridge, TN-35-R; Elkmont Vehicle Bridge, TN-35-S; and Luten Bridges, TN-35-T.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 3)

Introduction

Laurel Creek Road begins at the Townsend Wye, where it intersects with Little River Road. From here, the road travels southwest along the south bank of the Middle Prong of the Little River for only 0.2 mile, where the Middle Prong turns south and crosses under the road via a rustic style bridge. Laurel Creek Road continues southwest, following the south bank of the West Prong of the Little River, which runs into the Middle Prong where this river made its turn to the south.

As the road follows the West Prong, it begins to ascend towards its source in the mountains. Rock cuts are visible on the south side of the road, and revetment walls, which prevent the creek from undercutting the road, are visible on the north side.

The revetment walls in this area of the park are good examples of the differences between the old and new construction methods used for road related structures in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In adherence to Park Service standards which required road features to be constructed in the rustic style, revetment walls built in the 1930s and 1940s were made of

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 4)

carefully cut and arranged stones similar in color of the natural rock outcroppings along the road. In contrast, the new revetment walls under construction in 1996 are made of large boulders of various colors haphazardly placed between the road and the creek. Whereas the mortar in the old revetment walls was kept to a minimum and darkened to blend in with the surrounding stones, large areas of cement are clearly visible between the boulders in the new walls. Although cheaper and easier to construct, these new revetment walls detract from the rustic appearance of structures in the park.

At 1.1 miles, a tunnel carries Laurel Creek Road through a ridge around which it would have been difficult to build the road. The stone portals of the tunnel have been carefully designed to blend in with the rock outcroppings around it. At 2.1 miles, where the West Prong turns to the south into the mountains, a bridge carries the road over the river. Just over the bridge, the roadway is cut through a small ridge, around which flows Laurel Creek. After emerging from this cut, a second bridge carries the road over Laurel Creek, which flows into the West Prong on the opposite side of the ridge, just out of sight

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 5)

of the road. From there, the road follows Laurel Creek, which flows on the south side of the roadway.

The road crosses several bridges in this area, as other streams flow into Laurel Creek, which meanders from one side of the road to the other. In addition, the vegetation grows in very close to Laurel Creek Road, forming an almost solid canopy, and creating one of the most scenic experiences for motorists in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

At 3.6 miles, Laurel Creek Road crosses the creek via a rustic style bridge once again. A small parking area which provides trail access is located on the west side of the bridge. From here, the Schoolhouse Gap and Bote Mountain trails, which follow the route of a road which predates the park, head off to the north and south of the present Laurel Creek Road.

In the area around the 6 milepost, the Laurel Creek Road begins to climb steeply toward Crib Gap and the entrance to Cades Cove. Where the creek turns to the south towards Bote Mountain, the road continues southwest along the side of Allnight Ridge, which rises steeply along the south side of the road. On the north side, the ridge falls steeply away from the road.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 6)

Laurel Creek Road reaches Crib Gap at 6.6 miles, which carries it between Allnight Ridge to the south and Crooked Arm Ridge to the north. From here, the road begins its descent into Cades Cove. The Laurel Creek Road ends at 7.5 miles, where it meets the Cades Cove Loop Road.

The Cades Cove Loop Road begins in the northeast corner of Cades Cove, a 5-mile long and 2-mile wide opening in the Great Smoky Mountains. Here, the one-way road begins its journey west into the cove. A parking area and interpretive exhibit are provided in this area to allow motorists to fix their bearings and pick up a copy of the Cades Cove auto tour interpretive booklet, which explains the history of the area and the many homesteads and other structures preserved here.

At its start, the loop road skirts the edge of the forest on the north side of Cades Cove. Open fields, which are preserved by the Park Service to recreate the character of the agricultural settlement once located here, are visible to the south of the road. A small herd of cattle graze in these fields, keeping the forest from reclaiming the open land. The mountains which enclose Cades Cove can be seen rising on all sides.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 7)

While traveling over the present-day Cades Cove Loop Road, motorists are passing over many of the old roads which were built in this area in the nineteenth century. At times, the land on the sides of the loop road rises vertically from the roadbed for several feet. This is evidence of the ruts which developed on these old roads as continued use by wagons, and later automobiles, dug the roads deeper into the earth. In addition, the traces of old roads can be seen running off in all direction from the current road. At 1-mile from the beginning of the loop road, Sparks Lane, one of these early roads which is still in use, travels off to the south.

The John Oliver Place, which is the first of the restored structures along the Cades Cove Loop Road, is located to the north of the road at 1.1 miles. At 1.7 miles, the road turns slightly north and travels further into the forest at the edge of the cove and away from the open fields at its center. The trace of several old roads are clearly visible among the trees here, and at 2.3 miles, a short road to the south heads to an old church. Another church is located on the north side of the road at 2.6 miles.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 8)

Hyatt Lane, another old road which is still in use, runs south from the loop road at 3 miles. This road is connected with Rich Mountain Road, a one-way primitive dirt road which is located 0.1 mile further up the loop road. The Rich Mountain Road travels north, over Cades Cove Mountains then up to the top of Rich Mountain and the park boundary, a point 7 miles from its beginning at the loop road. From here, the Rich Mountain Road descends into Tuckaleechee Cove and continues on to Townsend, Tennessee. All along its route, the Rich Mountain Road offers motorists dramatic views of Cades Cove and the surrounding mountains. Just opposite the entrance to the Rich Mountain Road, at 3.1 miles, is the Missionary Baptist Church, which has a small graveyard next to it.

As the loop road approaches the west side of Cades Cove, several overlooks provide views back into the cove. The first, at 3.6 miles, looks out to the south and east, towards the main ridge of the Great Smoky Mountains, which rises to the south of Cades Cove, and into the large fields in the center of the cove itself. In the morning or evening, many deer can be seen grazing in these fields as if they were cattle. In fact, so many deer

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 9)

may be seen along the Cades Cove Loop Road, that traffic traveling along the road often comes to a halt as motorists stop to view the deer. If a bear is near the road, a "bear jam" are sure to occur, as visitors stop their cars in the middle of the road and leave them to take photographs of the bear. Even when there are no bear or deer to cause jams, the traffic often travels at 10 miles-per-hour or less, which may prove frustrating for some motorists. As a result, the best way for visitors to enjoy Cades Cove is by riding a bicycle or even walking through this section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. To facilitate these activities, the Park Service closes the loop road to automobiles on Sunday and Wednesday mornings from sunrise to 10 A.M.

The Cades Cove Loop Road turns south at 4.4 miles and begins to cross through the open fields. At this point, the Cooper hiking trail, which was once a road out of Cades Cove, travels away from the loop road to the west. The Elijah Oliver Place, another restored homestead, is located a short distance west of the loop road at 4.6 miles. At 5 miles, the loop road crosses

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 10)

Abrams Creek, the major stream draining Cades Cove, via a small wood bridge.

At 5.5 miles, the loop road turns to the east to continue its journey around the edge of Cades Cove. Here, a short spur road heads west to the Cades Cove Visitor Center and Cable Mill, which contains a restored mill and blacksmith shop. A second road, Forge Creek Road, travels south for 2.5 miles to the beginning of the Parsons Branch Road. From here, this one-way primitive dirt road heads south for 8 miles, climbing over Hannah Mountain, then descending to Parsons Branch, which it follows to the park boundary at U.S. Highway 129.

From its intersection with Forge Creek-Parsons Branch Road, the Cades Cove Loop Road travels east along the south side of the cove, where the largest number of restored historic structures are located. These include an old barn at 6.3 miles, the Dan Lawson place at 6.8 miles, the Tipton place at 7.3 miles, and the Carter Shields cabin at 8.2 miles.

The one-way Cades Cove Loop Road ends at 10.1 miles, where it intersects with a two-way road. Turning left here, the two-way road completes the loop by returning the motorist 0.5 mile to

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 11)

the parking area at the beginning of the one-way section of the road and the intersection with the Laurel Creek Road which leads out of Cades Cove. By turning right on the two-way road, the motorist travels a short distance to the Cades Cove Campground and the one general store located in the park.

Pre-Park Era Trails and Roads in Cades Cove and Environs

In the period before white settlers entered the Great Smoky Mountains region, a number of footpaths had been blazed through the mountains by the Cherokee. Along Laurel Creek, the Cherokee established the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail, which ran from present-day Sevierville to Tuckaleechee Cove, where the community of Townsend is today. From Tuckaleechee, the trail followed the Little River upstream into what is today Great Smoky Mountains National Park. At the junction of the Little River and Laurel Creek, now known as the Townsend Wye, the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail followed Laurel Creek to Cades Cove, where it divided into several branches which led through mountain passes. Two trails went to the south, along Hazel Creek and

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 12)

Twenty Mile Creek, and a third went west toward Chilhowee Mountain.¹

In the 1820s, white settlers journeyed into Cades Cove over the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail, which slowly developed into a wagon road. By the mid-nineteenth century, the cove was a community of 137 homes with 685 residents.² In order to leave the flat land in Cades Cove open for farming and livestock, these homesteads were located around the edge of the cove, at the foot of the surrounding mountains. Most of the roads constructed in Cades Cove in the nineteenth century connected the various homesteads, and also stayed close to the foot of the mountains. The present loop road which carries park visitors through Cades Cove follows this circular road system established by early settlers.³

¹ Robert Lambert, "The Pioneer History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," an unpublished report to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent, October 1, 1957, 8; Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library, Gatlinburg, Tennessee (hereafter referred to as GSMNP Library).

² Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, "Cades Cove," an interpretive booklet, 2.

³ Ibid, 5.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 13)

In the 1830s, two turnpikes were constructed just over the mountains from Cades Cove, which led residents of this isolated area to construct new roads out of the cove to connect with these transportation arteries. One was the Anderson Turnpike, which ran from Tuckaleechee Cove through School House Gap to Laurel Creek, and up Bote Mountain to Spence Field. From here, North Carolinians were to have continued the road down the Smokies, but never did. The park's present-day School House Gap and Bote Mountain trails follow the route of the Anderson Turnpike.⁴ In 1836, residents of Cades Cove built a wagon road over Crib Gap at the east side of the cove, then down the sides of Allnight Ridge and Bote Mountain to meet the Anderson Trail where it crossed Laurel Creek.⁵

The second turnpike built near Cades Cove in the 1830s was the Parsons Turnpike, a north-south road which ran from Tennessee into North Carolina, roughly along the route of present-day U.S. Highway 129. In 1838, construction began on the Parsons Branch

⁴ DeFoe, *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*, 499.

⁵ A. Randolph Shields, *The Cades Cove Story* (Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1977) 13.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 14)

Road from Cades Cove southwest to the Parsons Turnpike. The present-day Parsons Branch Road follows the route of the this nineteenth century road.⁶

In addition to the Crib Gap and Parsons Branch roads, three other roads leading out of Cades Cove were constructed in the 1830s. One road traveled to the north through Indian Grave Gap and down into Tuckaleechee Cove, serving as the principal route in and out of Cades Cove until the state of Tennessee built the present Rich Mountain Road in 1920. The second road, known as Cooper Road, was the main northwest route to Maryville, Tennessee. The third road, Rabbit Creek Road, followed a branch of the Cherokee's Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail to the west of Cades Cove.⁷ The present-day Cooper Road and Rabbit Creek trails follow the routes of these former roads out of Cades Cove.⁸

Park Service Roads in Cades Cove and Laurel Creek

⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁸ Defoe, *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*, 177 & 467.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 15)

With the coming of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934, most of the people living in Cades Cove were forced to sell their homes and leave in the late 1920s and early 1930s, while others were granted lifetime leases to their property. The Park Service removed most of the buildings in the area, but left several in order to interpret the lives of these people for park visitors.

The first improvements to the roads in Cades Cove under the Park Service started in January 1934, when the CCC began draining and surfacing the road which ran east from the Cove through Crib Gap.⁹ A small quarry was created in the Cades Cove to provide crushed rock for surfacing this and other roads in the area.¹⁰

The improvement of the road through Crib Gap was being done in preparation for the construction of the Laurel Creek Road, which would lead down Laurel Creek and through Dry Valley to Townsend, providing a new entrance to Cades Cove.¹¹ Prior to the construction of the Laurel Creek Road, access to and from Cades

⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1934; GSMNP.

¹⁰ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1934; GSMNP.

¹¹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1934; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 16)

Cove for park visitors was over the Rich Mountain Road. Although the Park Service characterized Cades Cove as a place with "a spirit of peaceful quiet and complacency which adds to its charm," the agency warned that the area was reached "by an exceptionally tortuous road. Drivers should use their horns freely in making the curves." In fact, the Park Service did "not recommend" that the Rich Mountain Road be driven by the "inexperienced or nervous driver."¹² Between 1934 and 1938, the CCC improved the Rich Mountain Road by stabilizing its slopes to prevent erosion and land slides.¹³ During the same period, the enrollees improved the Parsons Branch Road, which was not open to motorists in the park, but served as a truck trail.¹⁴

After Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established, most of the old wagon roads within the park were converted into truck trails, which were open to hikers, and some to horseback

¹² "General Information Regarding Great Smoky Mountains National Park" in Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.

¹³ Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

¹⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1936; GSMNP. Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 17)

riders. These roads also allowed the Park Service to bring vehicles deep into the park for administrative uses such as patrolling the backcountry and fighting forest fires. As a result, when present-day hikers in the park encounter a wide trail which looks as if it once served as a road, the chances are that it did. In 1936, a "field review of reconnaissance lines" began for the proposed road along Laurel Creek and through Cades Cove, which was supposed to continue to the west boundary of the park and on to Maryville, possibly along the route of the old Cooper Road. The reconnaissance found that a route to Cades Cove along Laurel Creek provided "an easy grade," but would require "a large number of bridges and curvature." An alternative route through Meadow Creek was also investigated.¹⁵

Work began on the Laurel Creek Road in October 1938 when a survey crew located the right of way for the roadbed from the mouth of the Middle Prong of the Little River at the Townsend Wye, west to what was referred to as the "Bote Mountain Road," which was the former Anderson Turnpike and is the present-day

¹⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1936; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 18)

Bote Mountain Trail.¹⁶ Clearing began early in November, and grading on November 21.¹⁷ By January 1939, work had begun on the one tunnel along the road which would carry it through a ridge which protruded into the right-of-way for the road.¹⁸ In February, there was a cave-in at the tunnel, crushing a truck. Fortunately no workers were injured.¹⁹

The work on the Laurel Creek Road, which was referred to as the Cades Cove Road at this time, was carried out under a "force account," meaning that the construction work was done directly by the BPR rather than a contractor. However, the Superintendent's Monthly Report for February 1939 reported that the "force account construction of the Cades Cove Road will be discontinued around April 15 and the road contracted."²⁰

The work on the roadbed of the Laurel Creek Road from the Townsend Wye to the Bote Mountain Road was completed by the new

¹⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1938; GSMNP.

¹⁷ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1938; GSMNP.

¹⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1939; GSMNP.

¹⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1939; GSMNP.

²⁰ Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1939; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 19)

contractor in July 1939, at which time work began on the bridge across the Middle Prong of the Little River, which would connect this new road with the Little River Road.²¹ The bridge was completed on January 22, 1940.²²

Construction of the next portion of the Laurel Creek Road, which would run for 2.7 miles past Bote Mountain and include two bridges, was probably begun in December 1939.²³ By June 1940, work had started on at least one of the two bridges.²⁴ This section of the road was completed on August 9, 1941.²⁵

Construction of the final 4 miles of the Laurel Creek Road was begun by the Asheville Construction Company in May 1941.²⁶ The five bridges along this section of the road were not included in the contract, which was completed in December 1942. This was one of the last projects in the park before all construction was

²¹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1939; GSMNP.

²² Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1940; GSMNP.

²³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1939; GSMNP.

²⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1940; GSMNP.

²⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1941; GSMNP.

²⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1941; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 20)

halted by World War II.²⁷ The five bridges would not be constructed until after the war, thereby delaying the opening of the road.

Following the war, the Gatlinburg Construction Company began a \$117,291 project to build the five bridges (numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, and either number 3 or 4) on the Laurel Creek Road. Construction on the first bridge began in June 1949,²⁸ and the project was completed on August 8, 1950.²⁹

In October 1949, work began on the improvement of the road through Cades Cove, which was to include repairing small bridges, installing culverts and drainage, and grading the road and adjacent ditches.³⁰ In May 1950, the improvement of the road had progressed to the point where it was ready to be surfaced by crushed stone.³¹ This was begun by the Summers-Taylor Paving Company of Elizabethtown, Tennessee on July 24, and probably

²⁷ Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1942; GSMNP.

²⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1949; GSMNP.

²⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1950; GSMNP.

³⁰ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1949; GSMNP.

³¹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1950; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 21)

included both the Cades Cove and Laurel Creek roads, which were collectively referred to as the Cades Cove Road at that time.³² Paving was completed on November 10, and the new Laurel Creek Road into Cades Cove was opened to the public on November 19, 1950.³³

Post-War Improvement and Expansion of the Roads in Cades Cove

Interpretive signs, referred to as "descriptive markers," were erected on the Cades Cove Loop Road in May 1952, and more were to come the following month. Park Superintendent John Preston reported that "[t]hese signs have provoked some complimentary comments" from visitors.³⁴ In October, survey work began on the roads for the Cades Cove Campground,³⁵ with clearing being completed the following month.³⁶ The completion date for this project is not available.

³² Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1950; GSMNP.

³³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1950; GSMNP.

³⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1952; GSMNP.

³⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1952; GSMNP.

³⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1952; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 22)

As it did for other sections of the park, the Mission 66 period brought plans for the expansion and improvement of Cades Cove. This included the expansion of the campground to 250 sites (planned for 1958), the expansion of the adjacent picnic area (which was underway in April 1956, but no completion date is available),³⁷ and the improvement of the loop road, the first phase of which was completed in June 1956.³⁸ The final phase of the improvement of the roads in Cades Cove was begun by the Fort Loudon Construction Company on October 28, 1958,³⁹ and was completed on August 25, 1959.⁴⁰ This project probably included the construction of new roads and parking areas at the expanded campground and picnic areas.

Two bridges on the Parsons Branch Road, one over Anthony Creek and the other over Forge Creek, were rebuilt in 1963. Work began on January 10, when a Park Service crew began to dismantle

³⁷ National Park Service, *Mission 66 Prospectus*, 1956, 16-17; Foothills Parkway Vertical File; Library GSMNP.

³⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1956; GSMNP.

³⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1958; GSMNP.

⁴⁰ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1959; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 23)

the bridge over Anthony Creek.⁴¹ The bridge over Forge Creek was completed in February,⁴² and the full project was completed in April or May.⁴³

On June 4, 1966, the Rich Mountain Road was converted to one-way traffic leading out of Cades Cove, and on June 15 the Parsons Branch Road was opened for public automobile use for the first time.⁴⁴ Based on the Superintendent's Monthly Reports, it can be inferred that the Rich Mountain Road had continued to operate as a two-way road even after the Laurel Creek Road entrance to Cades Cove opened in 1950, but was being made into a one-way road at this time because of concerns over the safety of the increasing number of visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park driving on this treacherous road.

With the increasing visitation experienced by the park in the postwar era, traffic congestion became a regular problem. In 1972, the park staff discussed using some form of public

⁴¹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1963; GSMNP.

⁴² Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1963; GSMNP.

⁴³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1963; GSMNP.

⁴⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1966; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 24)

transportation on the Cades Cove Loop Road in order to reduce congestion and the accompanying air pollution.⁴⁵ The Park Service has continued to consider a transportation alternative, but to date none have been implemented.

Recent Road Construction in Cades Cove

A \$575,000 contract to rebuild thirteen small bridges throughout the park was awarded to the F. and E. Construction Company of Knoxville in September 1981.⁴⁶ In December, the contractor began work on the bridge on Hyatt Lane, which runs from north to south in Cades Cove.⁴⁷ The contractor also rebuilt bridges on Parsons Branch Road, beginning work on the bridge over Forge Creek in April,⁴⁸ and the bridges over Jakes

⁴⁵ Staff Meeting Minutes, February 15, 1972; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁴⁶ Staff Meeting Minutes, September 15, 1981; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁴⁷ Staff Meeting Minutes, December 15, 1981; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁴⁸ Staff Meeting Minutes, April 20, 1982; Box Staff Meeting Minutes; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 25)

Creek and Parsons Branch in May.⁴⁹ The project for all thirteen bridges in the park was scheduled to be completed on February 16, 1983.⁵⁰

A second bridge project was begun in November or December 1982, by Blalock and Sons. This project included the bridge over Abrams Creek on the west side of the Cades Cove Loop Road, which necessitated closing part of the loop road beyond Hyatt Lane.⁵¹ Abrams Creek Bridge was completed in 1983,⁵² and the bridge project as a whole was completed in April 1984.

The Parsons Branch Road was severely damaged by a flood in March 1994, and has been closed since that time. The FHWA has surveyed the damage and estimated the cost of repairing the road, but to date, no decision had been made by the Park Service as whether or not to repair the road. An environmental assessment

⁴⁹ Staff Meeting Minutes, May 18, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁵⁰ Staff Meeting Minutes, January 18, 1983; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁵¹ Staff Meeting Minutes, November 16, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

⁵² Staff Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1984; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 26)

is currently being prepared in order to assist in the
determination of the future of the road.⁵³

⁵³ Open Letter from Susan Wade, Superintendent, May 30, 1996;
Parsons Branch Road Vertical File; Library GSMNP.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS
HAER NO. TN-35-D
(Page 27)

Sources Consulted

Unpublished Records:

Records of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Government Documents:

Federal Highway Administration. "Bridge Safety Inspection Report, NPS Route 1A Thru Morton Mountain, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. 1980.

Federal Highway Administration. "Bridge Safety Inspection Report, NPS Route 1A Thru Chimney Tops, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1980.

Federal Highway Administration. "Bridge Safety Inspection Report, NPS Route 4 Over Little River, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1981.

Federal Highway Administration. "Final Construction Report, 3B13, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1974.

National Park Service. *Environmental Impact Statement, Foothills Parkway, Section 8D*. Volume 1, August 8, 1984 (draft).

National Park Service. *Mission 66 Prospectus*. 1956.

National Park Service. *Transportation Concepts, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. 1971.

Public Roads Administration. "Final Construction Report, Project GSM 3B1, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1940.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 28)

U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. "Final Construction Report, Project 1A5, Loop Bridge, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1936.

U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. "Final Construction Report, Project 1A7, Bridge Number 8 Across West Prong of Little Pigeon River at Junction Routes 1 and 3." 1937.

U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. "Final Construction Report, Project 3C2, Construction of Bridge Over Middle Prong of Little River, Spur to Park Boundary, Great Smoky Mountains National Park." 1953.

U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. "Inventory and Inspection Report." 1950.

Unpublished Manuscripts:

Givens, Peter Shelbourne. "Cataloochee and the Establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Master's thesis, Western North Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, 1978.

Lambert, Robert. "Logging in Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Unpublished report to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent, 1958.

Lambert, Robert. "The Pioneer History of Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Unpublished report to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent, 1957.

Lix, Henry W. "A Short History of Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Unpublished manuscript, 1958.

Periodicals:

Asheville Times.

The Daily Times.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,
CADES COVE AND LAUREL CREEK ROADS

HAER NO. TN-35-D

(Page 29)

Knoxville News-Sentinel.

The Living Wilderness.

The Mountain Press.

Secondary Sources:

Campbell, Carlos. *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960).

Defoe, Don, et al., eds. *Hiking Trails of the Smokies.* Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1994.

Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. "Cades Cove: Auto Tour."

Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. "Cataloochee: Auto Tour."

Shields, A. Randolph. *The Cades Cove Story.* Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1977.

Weals, Vic. *Last Train to Elkmont: A Look Back at Life on the Little River in the Great Smoky Mountains.* Knoxville: Olden Press, 1991.